

A Serious and Seasonable Invektive against

# SLEEPING in the CHURCH,

Briefly shewing the Sin, the Shame, and the Danger of it.

**I** Here is nothing that God is more concerned about in the World, than his own Glory, being very Jealous of his Honour. Hence it is that God is such an Imp'acable Enemy to Sin; Sin being contrary to his Holy and Pure Nature, and consequently a stain to his Honour, and Detracting from his Glory. God looks upon it as a great Dishonour done to his Sacred Majesty, when men are careless of their Carriage and Deportment before him, forgetting that he is a Great and a Terrible God. This is the sin and the shame of many Pretended Worshipers of God in our Age, who no sooner are come into the Society and Assembly of God's People, to wait upon him, and obtain a blessing from him [wanting a due sense of God's Presence, and Awe of his Dreadful Name] Drowsiness possesses, and oft-times a Dead Sleep falls upon them; so that, poor slumbering Souls being asleep in sin, they sleep away their mercies. While God is bestowing the gracious Doles of his Love and Grace, they are snoring in their Pews, as if they were unconcerned, or had no Lot or Portion in the Matter. This Practice [so common among Professors in these Days, as that a Man cannot tell where to go to hear a Sermon Preached, but he shall find some of these miserable dull Sots either Nodding their Heads up and down, or else fast asleep, till they snort again] is highly displeasing to God, and deserves a sharp and severe Reproof. And that inasmuch as

1. 'Tis a very great Affront done to the Majesty of Heaven & Earth, when there is no more Respect or Reverence shewn to the Eternal God, no more Awe or Dread upon the Spirits of Men. Did you believe the Great God was present, and that you were speaking to him in Prayer, or he to you in the Ministry of his Word, you would not be thus dull and sleepy. Were you convinced that you were in the House of God, and that the Place was no other than the Gate of Heaven, *Gen. 28. 17.* you would be more quick and lively than to fall asleep there. This irreverent and unbecoming Carriage would be a great Affront to the Majesty of an Earthly King, neither could the Petitioner expect any other thing than to have a denial, and frown, if not committed close Prisoner for his great Offence. Earthly Kings and Princes have more and greater Respect to their Honour; and who will be such a disingenuous Sot, as to account it no Affront to the King of Heaven and all the Earth, thus irreverently to behave themselves in his Presence, even when they come to petition his glorious Majesty?

2. 'Tis a Discovery of that great Insensibleness that men labour under of their great misery and need of Mercy. Were men convinced of the sad Estate they are in by Nature, they would be more earnest after Grace and Glory; they would search after it, and endeavour to obtain it with more liveliness and activity. Who could sleep, especially at an Ordinance, if he saw himself on the brink of a bottomless Pit, or hanging by a weak Thread or Hair over Everlasting Burnings? No man, that is well in his wits, if condemned to the Gallows, would fall asleep while he is begging his Pardon. Dull ignorant Sots Men and Women are to fall snoring when they are Praying for their Immortal Souls.

3. This Practice continued in, and allowed of, demonstrates that thou art nothing but a Cursed Hypocrite hitherto; that thou hast dealt deceitfully with God, and that in the midst of all thy Religious Pretences. Thou sittest [or rather Lollest] in the Presence of God, but thine Heart is far away from him. Outward Acts discover Inward Habits, and there can be no better demonstration of a Bad Heart, than an Evil Life. And, who can imagine that the Heart and Soul are engaged with God in Duty, and Religious Worship, when the Body is asleep? When the Senses are locked up, the Affections cannot be vigorous in the Performance of their Acts.

4. All thy Religious Duties are horrible Abuses; thy Prayers are Prophanations of the Sacred Name of God. *I, saith the Lord, will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified, Lev. 10. 3.* God's Name is taken in vain, when Men Irreverently and Unbecomingly use it, without Respect to the Greatness of his Majesty, knowing that he is a Great and a Terrible God, and will not hold them Guiltless, viz. will certainly punish those that take his Name into their

Lips in vain. 'Tis a dreadful thing to have our Duties become Sin, to have our Supplications esteemed but Execrations, our Prayers but Curses, our Praises and Thanksgivings but as Blasphemies, *Isa. 66. 3.*

II. It is a very shameful thing, every one cries, Fie, Out upon it, as a thing that is odious and hateful: What? to sleep at Church in the Congregation? Is it not a shameful thing to have the Minister call out aloud to awaken you? and then the Eyes of all the Assembly are upon you as one that is ridiculous: As much as to say, Who is that shameless Wretch that hath no more Respect to God nor Man? let us see him, that we may set some Remarks upon him. Who would not blush then at so shameful a thing condemned by God, reproved by the Minister, detested and abhorred by the People?

III. 'Tis not only a sinful and shameful thing, but 'tis likewise as dangerous, 'Tis dangerous to dally with a Raging Lion, or to play at the hole of the poisonous Asp: even so 'tis highly dangerous to dally with God in his Service, or to play the Hypocrite in his Presence. Is it not a dangerous thing for a Malefactor to fall asleep when at his Trial, if he have a Pardon which must be tendered to the Judge? Every one would say, 'tis as much as his Life is worth. We are Malefactors before God, and we come into his Presence in Ordinances, to plead our Pardon for the sake of Christ, and of his Merits: And can any one that is in his wits, be so mad, as to run himself by his Drowsiness into danger to have himself, and all his Pretences to a Pardon cast out with Scorn and Indignation? Yet such mad Fools are Men and Women, as to run themselves into such great danger.

1. Thou art in danger of being struck dead in the very place: To be stricken dead suddenly in any place is terrible, but to be stricken dead in the Presence of God, when thou art abusing his Name and Ordinances, this is exceeding terrible: What! God speaking, and thou sleeping? God may justly say to Death, Go strike that dull drowsie Sot at the Heart, he will not hear Me, let him feel Thee; My Words do not reach his Ears, let Thine Arrows pierce his Heart. It had like to have cost *Eutychus* his Life for Sleeping while *Paul* Preached, *Acts 20. 9.* And thou knowest not but what was like to be *Eutychus* his Lot, may indeed be thine. Thou wilt not hear the Word of God, God may make thee feel his Rod: Thou takest no care of thy Carriage in his Presence, God may turn thee out of his Presence into an Eternal State: Thou forgettest to Reverence him when thou art before him, and God may refuse to preserve thee in Life while thou art before him.

2. Thou art in danger of being sent packing to Hell from Ordinances: None but an infinitely Merciful God can bear with such Intollerable Affronts, & thou mayest assure thy self that sooner or later Divine Vengeance will take hold of thee if thou go on thus to affront him; his Hand will not alwaies spare thee neither mayest thou think to blind the Eyes of the Almighty for ever, but thou mayest for ever bewail thy Abuse of Ordinances, by cursing thy self for thy cursed Drowsiness in the Flames of Hell.

3. It is a terrible thing to sit under the Means of Grace, and not to profit by it, as certainly thou wilt not as long as thou indulgest thy self in this cursed sluggish frame of Spirit: Canst thou be the better for Sermons that sleepest them away? the better for Prayers, when thou knowest not what is prayed for? No, believe it, 'tis a very sad and dangerous thing to sit under Gospel Ordinances, and get no good by them.

4. The danger of this is the more, in that it is the ready way to be deprived of Gospel Ordinances. Do not think that God will alwaies force his Gospel and Gospel Ministers on a dull, sleepy, sottish People; and without doubt, where there is a scarcity of the Word of the Lord, 'tis for past Abuses, and former slights of it: And if God deprive us of his Ordinances, and cut us short of Sermons, we may justly conclude, that among other Reasons this may be one, our turning our Backs upon Ordinances, and sleeping away of Sermons. Let all then remember to Repent of this great sin that is so shameful and dangerous, viz. Sleeping in the Church when the Word of God is Preached: And let all men serve him with Fear and Trembling, knowing that our God is a Jealous God, our God is a Consuming Fire.